

Its not about the offering itself, but what the heart says in the offering!

Acts 4:32-5:11

THE TEXT

Our passage begins with another summary, not unlike that of Acts 2:42-44...which describes the marks of the early church...

We would normally look at our passage; as two separate events...as in 32-37, describing the unity and generosity **not only of the early church**, but of one particular example.

The other section would be chapter 5:1-11 the story of Ananias and Sapphira ...and the reason that I chose **not to separate the two**, but to take them as a whole is because I think what God through Luke is showing us is 3 things, well there are more than three, but I would like to underline 3.

1. Is we see what a church should be like, say in **theory**... verses 32-35
2. But then **proceeds** to give us a real life example of what someone who has become **free IN Christ Jesus** looks like and how they behave as part of church in this world...verse 36-37
3. **contrasted** with a couple still imprisoned to the flesh, yet to be **truly freed in the Lord's** grace and promises...Chapter 5:1-11.

And the way I believe Luke intended to show this as a whole is by his word structure in the introduction to Chapter 5...we read...**but a man named Ananias**....that's how it begins.

The word "**but**" as many of you know is a joining word, it is used to bridge **and incoming consequence** or to contrast something that has just been said.

The word "but" is used to contrast one with the other...So..

- Luke begins to describe the harmonious nature of a true church,

- then he introduces us to someone, who actually lives and behaves as an exemplar of the Christian life...and then we read....
- BUT, but a man named Ananias....to contrast the example of what was just said;

And so our passage begins...

MINOR POINT #1

1. Here is the description of Church harmony...As a family, as one body in Christ, what's mine is yours and what yours is mine...It is a beautiful **description in theory**...I say theory because its doubtless a unique church experience...but this is not to say that Providence we should not **aspire to this way of community**

1. **Now let me clarify** this so we do not stretch Luke's point to the absolute literal sense. The intention is not that we go out and sell everything we own, pool it together and share it like communists.
2. NO, **but the sense**, the spirit of the church, was that whatever they owned they used for the benefit of the church, and that they were all united as One by the Lord Jesus Christ.;

The church was united by Jesus, the church was individually tuned to Christ, and it was the **drawing** of Christ's people together **IN HIM**, that made them of one mind and soul.

OUTCOME #1

- Look what came from this harmonious care and having one mind and soul...

Acts 4:33

33 And with **great power** the apostles were **giving their testimony** to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **great grace** was upon them all.

1. They received **great power**...its an answer to their prayers to continue to speak the Word of God with boldness which is verse 31
2. And so they did not ignore preaching!!
3. and **great grace** was upon them all.

From this outworking of unity...great power in preaching and we see great grace. Well what does that look like?

Acts 4:34

34 There was not a needy person among them,

The early church preached the gospel with all power and did not neglect its people!!

MINOR POINT #2

2. Now Luke wants to make sure we don't accept it only in theory, so now he introduces us to Barnabas...so its not just theory, Luke says...

Acts 4:36

36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,

Here is the man I aspire to be like. I wonder if learning about how this man responded to the grace of God will also spark something in you, to aspire to be such as he....He was the quintessential encourager...

Look what this Barnabas does...

37 [He] sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Who does this!!!??? And yet with a disposition that the very apostles renamed him **son of encouragement!!**

And then, we read the contrast...

Acts 5:1-2

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,
2 and with his wife's knowledge **he kept back for himself** some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

We know the rest of the story...Peter somehow finds out, confronts Ananias; by saying;

Acts 5:3

Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit

Acts 5:4

4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have **contrived this deed in your heart?** You have not lied to man **but to God.**"

And so when Ananias hears these words he falls down and dies...And the same happens to his wife Sapphira.

POINT #1

Look at the first point. **God is triune and omnipresent.**
We spend a lot of time examining the deity of Jesus in the scriptures, and less time showing that the Holy Spirit as a person, is also God...

Did you notice how the Holy Spirit is referred to as God?

Acts 5:3-4

3 Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart **to lie to the Holy Spirit** and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to man but to God.**"

Now look at the other point; God is omnipresent, He is everywhere, so our offerings are not given to the church...but to God!

Acts 5:2

2 [Ananias] with his wife's knowledge kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

See how the offerings are brought to the feet of the Apostles, which means for the Apostles to administer, and yet Ananias is not cheating the Apostles, **but contriving against God!**

We must take care when we set our hearts to give to the church, that we understand that **the one to whom we give** is not an elder, is not another church member, but when we set our hearts to give, in whatever capacity to do so, we set our hearts to give to God!!!

And it is Him, and He alone who waits to receive! Our tithes and offerings mean an **eternal weight more** than just giving and placing mere tangibles into a basket, when we give it means we are giving as though God Himself were present – **and our giving thus becomes worship!**

This is why our second point is so important;

POINT #2

It's not about the offering itself, but what the heart says in the offering

And its so important because God ties the heart with the offering, the person to the offering.

So the state of the heart that is offering something to God, is how we tell God what we think of Him!!!

SAY IT AGAIN!

You see the state of Ananias' heart....?

Acts 5:2

with his wife's knowledge **[He] kept back for himself** some of the proceeds and brought only a **part of it** and laid it at the apostles' feet

The implication is Ananias was trying to make himself look better than he actually was...Ananias was concerned more about what people thought of him, than worshipping God.

But you see **God is not looking at the offering**...God is showing us from this passage that He will not look at the offering, because

It's not about the offering itself, but what the heart says in the offering

And when **we are stubborn**... or unwilling to submit to God's sovereignty and reign we **become imprisoned** to the flesh, to satisfying ourselves before God! **We become self-idolaters**. And from that is when sin rules over us.

Let me show what I mean from the first recorded murder in the bible.

Genesis 4:2b-7

2 ... Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.

3 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,

4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for **Abel and his offering**,

5 but for **Cain and his offering** he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?"

7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Notice three things;

1. The offering is not isolated from the person...

the Lord had regard for **Abel and his offering**, but for **Cain and his offering** he had no regard....The Lord ties the offering with the person. Because the heart of the person I saying something to God in the offering.

2. **If you do well, will you not be accepted?** Of course he will...

Obviously Cain knew what God desired, but purposely chose to go against His desire...It makes Cain capricious and stubborn...**this explains his unacceptable offering!**

3. **if you do not do well**, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

When we come to come with a stubborn heart...when try to please God with our own standard...sin creeps up to us, ready to take us. And we know how that ended for Cain...he killed his brother...

So the intention here is to point out, when we approach God;

It's not about the offering itself, but what the heart says in the offering...This is what matters to God...

CONCLUSION

Allow me moment to apply this to our lives...

What do you think makes us prone to be more like Ananias and Sapphira than Barnabas...? More inclined to offer God what we think is enough for Him, rather than being like Barnabas...selling a block of land and just giving it all to God?

What I think is the problem, is that we have been **so blessed with so much grace and so many promises**, we battle to believe and rest in all of them...

And what Barnabas shows us...is that to be **truly free IN Christ**, to be truly free in His will, strengthens us to rule over the sin of self-dependency! Barnabas shows us what true freedom is...to be able to let go of material dependency and to rest wholeheartedly on the promises of God.

While Ananias and Sapphira show us what it looks like when we are still imprisoned by the belief that must strive and we must lie so as to **make our lives more comfortable, otherwise we will miss out!**

BORN AGAIN

Yet if we been born again by God, Our Father, In Christ Jesus. We have been freed from self-reliance. If we are new creatures in Christ and we are born to a new hope, **why do we live as though we have no hope of a future of eternal wealth and glory?**

Do you not know that you will inherit great riches with your Lord Jesus? Listen to what awaits the one who conquers in Christ

Revelation 2:26-28

26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give **authority over the nations,**

27 and **he will rule them** with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

28 And **I will give him the morning star..**

This is yours in Christ...

You will be given authority to rule the nations, **that's the world...**
This means that those in Christ will rule with Christ the whole world for all eternity...**do you know this is your inheritance in Christ...?**

And the reason we will inherit the whole world is because we will be **given the morning star...**well what is this morning star...or should I say, who

Revelation 22:16

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, **the bright morning star.**"

We have been promised to **rule the world to come**, with the greatest inheritance of Jesus himself... If this is what is promised to us...if we will rule the world beyond this world with **Christ In Christ...**Let us not say we are poor, but that we are rich, co-heirs of the world...

Do you know what this means...? It means that Jesus as the direct revelation and complete expression of the Father...will be ours, and we will be His for all eternity...

We will inherit God! The very God that made precious metals, diamonds, gold, silver; who ordained the men and women to reign and rule in this world...He is our inheritance, and we His.

You, Providence, if you are found IN Jesus Christ, are the most wealthiest of all people in all existence! No **kings**, no **Fortune 500** CEO, no **movie star**, has anything on you, you are the richest, most powerful creature in existence, **because you have the morning star...because you have Christ Jesus!**

And Do not for a moment think that you can lose this promise, or that you have the capacity to ruin the chances of what is promised...because you are not the one guarding your inheritance...

That's God's job

So rest in this;

1 Peter 1:3-5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again** [to what? It continues]

to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

[so we are born again...and it is an act of God only....
What comes with this new birth...**a living hope through Jesus...**

So what is this hope in Jesus? It continues verse 4....

1 Peter 1:3-5

4 to an inheritance that is **imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,**

Amazing! It **imperishable** - it cannot be destroyed!

Undefiled - this means it won't go off, like spoiled milk - it remains forever good!

Unfading - it won't disappear, like here it is, and now it's gone. There will be no teasing like a magician giving the appearance of something but in reality there is nothing there.

NO WAY! Your inheritance in the heavens, co-reigning the new earth, inheriting of the morning star - is

Imperishable
Undefined
Unfading

But you may ask; you said we cannot lose this, how can we have this great reassurance, How can we know this? Because your God tells you He has you...**God fights for you**, God keeps your inheritance not you, so praise His name for this...

4 **[your inheritance]** is imperishable, undefined, and unfading,

kept in heaven for you...

5 **who by God's power are being guarded** through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Rest in this;

You, Christ follower, will reign in the next life with your Morning Star and this promise **is not mine to give to you...but your creator promises this to you** and He will guard this inheritance for you...

So how can we as Christians **not live lives encouragement if we know this?** Rest in these promises, know that what we have now compares to almost insignificance to what we will have then...

So let me ask you are question?

Who is the man or woman you want to be? **Have you found him/her, yet? If so!**

Well then live like them!